

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Withdrawn) A seasoning produced by interacting one or more microorganisms having protein hydrolysis potency with raw materials containing vegetable protein, wherein the hydrolysis ratio to amino acids is 65% or more; the isobutyl alcohol concentration is 0.1 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; the n-butyl alcohol concentration is 0.25 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; the isoamyl alcohol concentration is 0.5 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; and the acetic acid concentration is 100 mg per gram of nitrogen or less.

2. (Withdrawn) The seasoning according to claim 1, wherein the raw material containing vegetable protein is defatted soybean.

3. (Withdrawn) The seasoning according to claim 1, wherein said one or more microorganisms are filamentous fungi which belong to the genus *Aspergillus*.

4. (Withdrawn) The seasoning according to claim 3, wherein at least one of the microorganisms is selected from the group consisting of *Aspergillus oryzae* and *Aspergillus sojae*.

5. (Currently Amended) A process of producing a seasoning comprising:

(i) preparing solid koji by inoculating one or more microorganisms ~~with protein hydrolysis potency in raw materials containing vegetable~~ in a composition comprising soybean protein, wherein said microorganisms have protein hydrolysis potency and said microorganisms may be one or more belonging a genus selected from the group consisting of *Lactococcus*, *Aspergillus*, *Rhizopus*, *Mucor*, and *Monascus*; and

(ii) ~~hydrolyzing the protein~~ forming unrefined soy by adding a solution to the ~~resulting~~ said solid koji, wherein the ~~at a sodium chloride concentration of the unrefined soy is 5% by weight or less to form based on the total weight of said unrefined soy, purging the fermentation tank with nitrogen, sealing the fermentation tank, and then fermenting the~~

unrefined soy by hydrolyzing the soybean protein at a temperature ranging from 30 to 37°C for 40 to 144 hours,

wherein a lactic acid bacterium is added at the step (i) at 10^8 to 10^{11} cells per gram of ~~raw total material to the raw materials at the step (i)~~ and at the step (ii), a lactic acid bacterium is added to the unrefined soy at 10^8 to 10^{11} cells per gram of unrefined soy ~~to the unrefined soy,~~ and

wherein the seasoning is at a hydrolysis ratio to amino acids at 65% or more; an isobutyl alcohol concentration at 0.1 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; an n-butyl alcohol concentration at 0.25 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; an isoamyl alcohol concentration at 0.5 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; and an acetic acid concentration at 100 mg per gram of nitrogen or less.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 5, wherein the ~~raw material containing vegetable~~ soybean protein is defatted soybean protein.

8. (Original) The process according to claim 7, wherein the defatted soybean is modified and swelled in extruder to a nitrogen solution index (NSI) of 8 to 20.

9. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 5, wherein (ii) is carried out at ~~5 to 45°C for 40 to 144~~ 30 to 37°C for 48 to 96 hours.

10. (Original) The process according to claim 5, wherein the unrefined soy in (ii) is at pH 4 to 10.

11. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 5, wherein step (ii) is conducted under a nitrogen atmosphere of a volume 2 to 10 fold the volume of the headspace of the fermentation tank is purged to the headspace above the unrefined soy and then the tank is sealed in (ii).

12. (Canceled)

13. (Original) The process according to claim 5, wherein said one or more microorganisms with protein hydrolysis potency are filamentous fungi which belong to the genus *Aspergillus*.

14. (Original) The process according to claim 13, wherein at least one of the microorganisms with protein hydrolysis potency is selected from the group consisting of *Aspergillus oryzae* and *Aspergillus sojae*.

15. (Original) The process according to claim 5, where the lactic acid bacterium is *Lactococcus lactis*.

16. (Original) The process according to Claim 15, wherein said lactic acid bacterium is *L. lactis* FERM BP-08552.

17. (Currently Amended) A process of producing a seasoning comprising:

(i) preparing solid koji by inoculating one or more microorganisms ~~with protein hydrolysis potency in raw materials containing vegetable~~ in a composition comprising soybean protein, wherein said microorganisms have protein hydrolysis potency and said microorganisms may be one or more belonging a genus selected from the group consisting of *Lactococcus*, *Aspergillus*, *Rhizopus*, *Mucor*, and *Monascus*; and

(ii) ~~hydrolyzing the protein-forming unrefined soy~~ by adding a solution to ~~the resulting said solid koji, wherein the at a sodium chloride concentration of the unrefined soy is 5% by weight or less to form based on the total weight of said unrefined soy, purging the fermentation tank with nitrogen, sealing the fermentation tank, and then fermenting the unrefined soy by hydrolyzing the soybean protein at a temperature ranging from 30 to 37°C for 40 to 144 hours,~~

(iii) filtering the unrefined soy to remove solids contained therein, and

(iv) sterilizing the filtered soy

wherein a lactic acid bacterium is added at the step (i) at 10^8 to 10^{11} cells per gram of ~~raw total material to the raw materials at the step (i)~~ and at the step (ii), a lactic acid bacterium is added to the unrefined soy at 10^8 to 10^{11} cells per gram of unrefined soy ~~to the unrefined soy~~, and

wherein the seasoning is at a hydrolysis ratio to amino acids at 65% or more; an isobutyl alcohol concentration at 0.1 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; an n-butyl alcohol concentration at 0.25 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; an isoamyl alcohol concentration at 0.5 mg per gram of nitrogen or less; and an acetic acid concentration at 100 mg per gram of nitrogen or less.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 17, wherein the ~~raw material containing vegetable~~ soybean protein is defatted soybean protein.

20. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 19, wherein the defatted soybean is modified and swelled in extruder to a nitrogen solution index (NSI) of 8 to 20.

21. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 17, wherein (ii) is carried out at ~~5 to 45°C for 40 to 144~~ 30 to 37°C for 48 to 96 hours.

22. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 17, wherein the unrefined soy in (ii) is at pH 4 to 10.

23. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 17, wherein step (ii) is conducted under a nitrogen atmosphere of a volume 2- to 10-fold the volume of the headspace of the fermentation tank is purged to the headspace above the unrefined soy and then the tank is sealed in (ii).

24. (Canceled)

25. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 17, wherein said one or more microorganisms with protein hydrolysis potency are filamentous fungi which belong to the genus *Aspergillus*.

26. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 25, wherein at least one of the microorganisms with protein hydrolysis potency is selected from the group consisting of *Aspergillus oryzae* and *Aspergillus sojae*.

27. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 17, where the lactic acid bacterium is *Lactococcus lactis*.

28. (Previously Presented) The process according to Claim 27, wherein said lactic acid bacterium is *L. lactis* FERM BP-08552.

29. (Previously Presented) The process according to Claim 27, wherein said sterilizing is at a temperature ranging from 60 to 120°C.